Play Analysis: Texts and Contexts

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**In-class Assignment**

**RAS and THEMATIC Statements for *John and Jen***

Root action statement includes

1. a description of the protagonist (how the *kind* of person she/he helps propel the story)
2. basic given circumstances of the play
3. the main action the protagonist pursues
4. a description of the discovery and crisis of the protagonist
5. a description of the results of the discovery and crisis.

The Thematic Statement

1. is your personal interpretation of the story
2. is the underlying meaning you believe the playwright is sharing
3. is revealed through an analysis of the
   1. main action
   2. patterns in the script, including structural peculiarities
   3. the script’s title
   4. philosophical statements made by the character.

**EXAMPLE**

*Hamlet*

Root Action Statement:

Hamlet, the son of a recently deceased Danish king, is charged with the task of avenging his father’s murder at the hands of his brother Claudius. The melancholy prince must also reconcile the fact that his mother Gertrude has recently remarried his uncle, who now occupies the throne. Through a series of events—including failed attempts to kill king Claudius and moments of hesitation--Hamlet learns that his own life has been threatened and recommits to a course of revenge. However, his uncle acts first and attempts again to murder Hamlet and the duel between Hamlet and his dead girlfriend’s brother leads to a bloodbath on stage: in the final scene Hamlet, Laertes, Claudius and Gertrude are all killed and Swedish forces lead by Fortinbras enter the castle and overthrow the kingdom of Denmark.

Thematic Statement:

Through the soliloquies and actions of its main character--the melancholy prince of late medieval Denmark--Shakespeare’s play *Hamlet* explores concepts of death and afterlife. The slowly unwinding plot is filled with hesitations, existential reflections, lost loves, and the ultimate isolation of the main character, which in political terms suggests to the audience that the transition of power from one ruler to the next must follow the sacred order of succession, and if not, the punishment for unrighteous death of a monarch must come quickly and decisively.

*John and Jen*

Root Action Statement:

Thematic Statement: